The World Is a Stage

Shri Maharaj is a wonderful mimic. He has very mobile features, with large expressive eyes. And when he is explaining a point or describing a situation his features spontaneously respond to his thoughts and his actions. He is very articulate when he talks and makes a free use of gestures. It is, therefore, quite one thing to listen to the tape of a talk of Shri Maharaj's and totally a different thing altogether to sit at his feet and listen to him personally.

Among the listeners one morning was a well-known British actor. And Shri Maharaj was explaining the point that the image one has about oneself is not 'honest' because it keeps changing according to the circumstances. He went through the whole usual life span, describing the image one has of oneself as an infant sucking a nipple and wanting nothing else, and then through the whole gamut of one's life — as a teenager bursting with health and strength and with ambitions to conquer the world, then a love-sick young man, then on to the weary bread-earner with family responsibilities — and finally on to a sick old man, hardly able to open his mouth and quite incapable of controlling his bodily functions. 'Which is the real you? Is it any of these different images?' — he asked.

Shri Maharaj was so totally engrossed in his words and actions that his listeners were invitably impressed, and the actor was literally in tears! 'Never have I seen,' he said, 'such brilliance' — Shri Maharaj, sitting cross-legged on his seat on the floor and merely using his hands and his facial features, and, of course, his voice, in a language of which the foreigners did not understand a word. When this was translated to Shri Maharaj, he was greatly amused. 'Am I not a wonderful actor?' he asked. There were murmurs of appreciative assents from everyone.

'Do you really understand what I am

saying" he asked, "I know you have appreciated this little performance of mine. But what you have seen now is not even an infinitesimal part of my real acting ability. The whole universe is my stage. I not only act but I produce the stage, the equipment, the script, the actors — yes, one actor acting the roles of millions of people — and, what is more this show never ends! The script is being continuously written, new roles are prepared, new settings like every conceivable kind of situations. Am I not a wonderful actor?"

"And, what is ~~amusing is that~~ more, every one of you can say the same thing. And, what is amusing is that once you are really able to say that, the show is over for you! But will you? Will you see that it is only you that is ~~acting~~ ACTING the role of every character in the world, or will you confine and limit yourself to the one bit role that you think you ARE?"